CLAIMS

1. Polypeptide which is composed of the amino acids 1207 ± 10 to 1488 ± 10 of a hepatitis C virus and has less than 20 foreign amino acids.

2. Polypeptide as claimed in claim 1, which contains amino acids 1207 ± 5 to 1488 ± 5 of a hepatitis C virus.

3. Polypeptide as claimed in claim 1 or 2, which contains amino acids 1207 ± 2 to 1488 ± 2 of a hepatitis C virus.

4. Polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 3, which contains amino acids 1207 to 1488 of a hepatitis C virus.

5. Polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 4, which contains amino acids 14 - 295 of the amino acid sequence shown in SEQ ID NO. 1 or an amino acid sequence which is at least 90 % homologous to this.

6. Polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 5, which contains at least one marker group.

7. Polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 6, **wherein**
it contains one or several sulfhydryl groups in a covalently modified form.

8. Polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 6, **wherein**
one or several cysteine residues are replaced by other amino acids.

9. Polypeptide as claimed in claim 8, **wherein**
one or several cysteine residues are replaced by serine or α-aminobutyric acid.

10. Nucleic acid, **wherein**
it codes for a polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 9.

11. Nucleic acid as claimed in claim 10, **wherein**
it contains
(a) nucleotides 40 - 885 of the nucleotide sequence shown in SEQ ID NO.1 or
(b) a nucleotide sequence which corresponds to a sequence from (a) within the scope of the degeneracy of the genetic code.

12. Vector, **wherein**
it contains at least one copy of a nucleic acid as claimed in claim 10 or 11.

in which polypeptide P_1 (a) is bound to a solid phase or (b) is present in a form capable of binding to a solid phase and polypeptide P_2 carries a marker group,
and the antibody is detected by determining the label in the solid phase or/and in the liquid phase.

20. Method as claimed in claim 18,
wherein
the sample liquid is incubated with a polypeptide P_1 which (a) is bound to a solid phase or (b) is present in a form capable of binding to a solid phase and with a further antibody directed towards P_1 which carries a marker group and the antibody to be determined is detected by determining the label in the solid phase or/and in the liquid phase.

21. Method as claimed in one of the claims 18 to 20,
wherein
the determination of the antibody is carried out under reducing conditions.

22. Reagent for the immunological determination of an antibody directed towards a hepatitis C virus,
wherein
it contains at least one polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 9.

23. Reagent as claimed in claim 22, containing at least two polypeptides P_1 and P_2, wherein polypeptide P_1 (a) is bound to the solid phase or (b) is present in a form capable of binding to a solid phase and the polypeptide P_2 carries a marker group.

24. Reagent as claimed in claim 22, containing a polypeptide P_1 which (a) is bound to a solid phase or (b) is present in a form capable of binding to a solid phase and an antibody directed towards P_1 which carries a label.

25. Use of a polypeptide as claimed in one of the claims 1 to 9 for the production of a vaccine.

26. Method for the immunological determination of an antibody directed towards a hepatitis C virus in a sample liquid, wherein the sample liquid is incubated with at least one polypeptide which contains sequence regions from the hepatitis C virus, in particular from the NS3 region of the hepatitis C virus, and the antibody is detected by binding to the polypeptide,
wherein
a polypeptide is used from a region that contains at least one cysteine residue and (a) the determination of the antibody is carried out under reducing conditions, (b) one or several cysteine residues are covalently modified or/and (c) one or several cysteine residues are replaced by other amino acids.